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REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Regional disarmament and global security: elements for a regional approach to arms control and disarmament within the context of global security

Working paper submitted by the Netherlands*

AIM

The aim of the present paper is to suggest principles and measures which could be taken into account for the purpose of regional arms control and disarmament efforts. These proposals are made drawing on practical experience in various regions of the world and recognizing that they must be considered in the context of global security.

The adoption of regional arms control and disarmament measures is one of the most effective ways for States to contribute to the general arms control and disarmament process. Therefore, attaining stability and security for all the participating States should be the main objective of this process, resulting in an appropriate balance of forces in all regions.

I. GENERAL REFERENCES

Besides the Charter of the United Nations, especially Chapter VIII on Regional Arrangements, the following general references have, inter alia, been taken into account.

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* On behalf of the twelve States members of the European Communities.

1.1. Report of the United Nations Disarmament Commission's 1990 session: "The regional approach to disarmament is one of the essential elements in global efforts" (para. 11 of the report of the Working Group on agenda item 8). 1/

1.2. General Assembly resolution 45/58 M of 4 December 1990, adopted by consensus: "Regional disarmament, including confidence-building measures".

1.3. Guidelines for confidence-building measures adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1988. 2/

1.4. Regional disarmament centres (General Assembly resolution 45/59 E of 4 December 1990).

II. BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

The search for regional security structures and measures to encourage stability and peace should be pursued in order to enhance security at the lowest possible level of military forces, curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting economic and social progress.

The regional approach to arms control and disarmament should take into account legitimate national defence requirements in accordance with the right of self-defence as laid down in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is in the interest of regional security if States base their defence policies on military capabilities sufficient for individual or collective self-defence.

Regional and global disarmament

2.1. Arms control and disarmament achievements at regional level may, alongside bilateral and multilateral negotiations, facilitate progress towards the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The regional approach to disarmament is one of the essential elements in global efforts to achieve peace and security.

Any regional provision should take into consideration interdependence in that regard between neighbouring regions. Arms control and disarmament agreements between regions would also enhance global security.

Any regional measure should also take into account the relationship between security in the region and international security as a whole.

The international community should respect and support regional arrangements in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Regional stability and characteristics

2.2. Regional arms control and disarmament measures should contribute to, and increase, stability within a region.

Regional disarmament efforts should interact positively with bilateral and other regional political initiatives to build confidence and to overcome imbalances and tensions in one area from spreading to other areas. Positive results in one region should not have harmful effects on others.

Initiatives should take into account particular characteristics of each region and should lead to stability and security for all the participating States. The States in the region should themselves define appropriate and specific conditions for the security of their region, as well as conditions for ensuring their security in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and generally recognized principles of international law.

One essential principle would therefore be to give priority, in any regional disarmament process, to the elimination of the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances.

Rights of participating States

2.3. Regional arms control and disarmament provisions should not violate the principles of sovereignty, political independence and unity of any State.

Regional arms control and disarmament efforts should build on the principle of sovereign equality for the States in the region. States will have to respect each other's right to choose freely and to develop their political and security systems in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

Peaceful settlement of disputes

2.4. Regional arms control and disarmament should be consistent with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The obligation of States to refrain from the threat or use of force is vital for the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in a region.

Transparency

2.5. Transparency and openness are essential to progress in regional arms control and disarmament. They should also include the need to increase awareness of military activities and capabilities, as well as objective information on them, in order to enhance predictability and reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation. Transparency, openness and restraint are of the utmost importance for the creation of a climate conducive to realistic measures dealing with arms transfers.

Practical steps and undiminished security

2.6. Arms control and disarmament arrangements can be pursued more effectively through an approach whereby States within the region engage in pragmatic and specific practical steps, if necessary using a phased approach.

However, such an approach must respect the principle of undiminished security for all participants at all stages in the process.

Respect for international obligations

2.7. Regional arms control and disarmament should be advanced by the commitment of all participants to fulfil in good faith obligations under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant treaties, agreements and international law. Implementation of arms control and disarmament measures must not be impaired by circumvention.

III. POSSIBLE MEASURES TO FACILITATE AND ACHIEVE REGIONAL DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Initiatives from within the region

3.1. Initiatives for regional arms control and disarmament arrangements should come from within, and be developed by, the region itself.

Whilst initiatives from outside can act as catalysts, regional States concerned must be in a position to support such initiatives in order to impart the necessary momentum to make progress.

Agreement among all States of the region itself is essential to ensure the success of such arrangements.

Mutual confidence

3.2. To build and to strengthen mutual confidence is a long-term task for any regional group of States.

Arms control and disarmament measures can contribute to the building and strengthening of confidence. However, such measures cannot be fully successful if considered alone; complementary political cooperation in pertinent areas would enhance the building of confidence.

3.3. Development of a regional approach

To develop practical steps towards increased regional security, those elements which are the main source of instability and a threat to peace and security within the region should be identified.

Regional arms control and disarmament requires a common approach on security goals by States involved.

Confidence-building measures, designed to contribute to transparency and predictability of military activities, could be considered within the regions, at bilateral and multilateral levels, in order to facilitate further agreements.

Such measures as notification of large-scale military activities and exchange of military data, within the context of the particular region, could reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation.

Elimination of destabilizing military capabilities

3.4. In the framework of regional arms control and disarmament agreements, emphasis should be put on the elimination of the capacity to launch surprise attacks and large-scale offensive military operations.

Arms transfers

3.5. Disarmament measures in one region should not lead to increased arms transfers to other regions.

Verification

3.6. Appropriate verification measures for the implementation of regional arms control and disarmament agreements and treaties are essential.

Declarations

3.7. Declarations of non-use of force or threat of force can play a part in creating a climate of confidence based on mutual respect and aimed at ensuring better relations founded on solidarity and cooperation.

Regional mechanisms

3.8. Establishment of regional mechanisms or arrangements to further the cause of prevention of conflicts and peaceful settlement of disputes should be considered.

In addition, the United Nations may be able to play a greater role in the dissemination of information on regional arms control and disarmament measures.

Regional centres could make substantial contributions in this regard.

Informing the Security Council

3.9. In accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council should be informed of "activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security".

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/45/42), para. 34, p. 24.

2/ Ibid., Fifteenth Special Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/S-15/3), para. 41, pp. 22-32.